

Minutes of Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board AGM

At 1.30pm on Wednesday 17th April 2019, at the Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray

Attendees:

Roger Brook (ADSFB Chair/Awe District rep) – RB
Robert Younger (Clerk)-RY
Alan Kettle-White (AFT Biologist)- AKW
Alyssa Stewart (ADSFB/AFT Admin) – AS
Andrew Barker ((AFT Chair/Ruel district rep)- AB
Tuggy Delap (AFT Director)- TD
Tim King (AFT Director) - TK
Hugh Whittle (AFT Director) – HW
Johnny Brown (AFT Director) – JB
Jamie McGrigor (JM)

Members of the public:

Ian Tegner-(Euchar) IT
Stephen Austin (Nature Scotland)- SA
Aimee Williams (Nature Scotland) – AW
Campbell Thompson (CJT Spey Casting) - CT

Apologies:

Malcolm Robertson, Mr Forde, Ian Amory, Jim Frame, Owen Goulding, Steven Beale, David Stewart, Tony Huntington, Pandora Buchanan-Jardine, Duncan Rogers, Duncan Byatt, Frans Van Bommer, Calum McFarlane Barrow, Hugh Nicol, Nicholas Ferguson, Caroline Fleming, Tom Turnbull

Introduction and Apologies

RB thanked everyone for coming. AS read out the apologies. RB welcomes Aimee Williams from SNH and Ian Tegner from Euchar.

Approval of Previous Minutes

Proposed by all attendees and accepted as accurate by AB and HW.

Declaration of Members Interests

JM stated that he is a Councillor for Argyll and Bute Council and Honorary President of the Clyde Fishermen's Association.

Matters Arising

None

Finance and Clerks Annual Report

The accounts were discussed (also available online). Income was £66,516 from levies, £23,472 from SSE. Part of the levy was distributed to RIA's and part kept by the Board in a river improvement fund for those without RIA's. Lat year made gross surplus; this was to do with the transfer of money from the Board to the Trust which as it was not spent last year shows a surplus this year.

Clerking costs have dropped significantly, this is because RY is volunteering his time and claiming only expenses.

Small Rivers were offered the chance to sign an exemption form, this reduced the levy income, the old debts were not pursued as proprietors were unlikely to pay again.

The asset column shows a surplus, debtors has since decreased as there was a large payment made this week after RY threatened action by solicitors.

The budget was discussed, there is a provision for bad debt to allow for those that are being removed from the assessment roll wit outstanding debts.

Consultation investigating and responses are now completed by AKW on behalf of the Board.

These changes allow the levy rate to be altered, however RB is reluctant to do so as if the AFT progresses at RB hopes to, and a Clerk is maintained then the prudent thing to do is to leave the levy as it is.

All were happy that it remains as is.

RB met with Rosie Campbell-Preston and JB from ADRIA to discuss the levy, they pay £3.10 in the £1 which allows ADRIA to pay for a bailiff, along with £9000 from SSE. It was proposed that the levy be reduced to £2.90 and that the Board will help ADRIA with cash flow if needed. All approved.

Scottish and Southern agree with ADRIA and ADSFB where the money is allocated.

JM questioned whether ADRIA could withdraw from the Board, RB confirmed that they can they do so. However, JB explained that JB and RCP have looked into this, and was agreed that ADRIA should remain as is.

Evaluations is completed by the local assessor ideally every 5 years, however the last review took time 7 years. There should be another evaluation in 3-years time but that is down to the government.

The accounts were approved.

RY circulated a report on the activities of the Board – see 2018 Annual Report online at <http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/publications/>.

Aquaculture Update and Discussion

RB, RY and Alan Wells from FMS are part of the Salmon Interactions Working Group, the objective is to sit down and agree proposals. The committee includes the aquaculture and wild fisheries sectors, Scottish Environment Link (SELINK), Marine Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Local Planners and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). RB spoke of the aims of the Salmon Interactions Working Group:

- Look at the conclusions and any emerging recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiries into farmed salmon in Scotland
- Evaluate current Scottish Government policy and advice governing wild/farmed salmon sea lice interactions, and review the existing and planned projects around the interactions
- Make recommendations, including a delivery plan of agreed actions and timescales, for a future interactions approach.

Working to change the regulations is slow progress. Key focuses are the EMP, Environmental Management Plan. Loch Melfort EMP will hopefully become a model for future EMP's. There are 10 farms in the area. The EMP will monitor the environment out with the farm and results will be reported to the management of the farm. There is a need to understand relationship between farmed salmon production and the health of wild salmonoids. Fish Farmers will be responsive to evidence of the impact on wild fish. An operator Action Request (OAR) which will summarise the evidence, indicate a time frame and the desired outcome.

It will include:

- On farm sea lice control
- Normal monitoring of code of practice standards
- Aim to keep below a maximum sea lice load
- Intervention level set at 0.5 lice per fish
- Early treatment of individual pens
- Access to lice counts

Aims of the EMP is to ensure that farming does not result in negative impacts to local salmon and sea trout populations.

Credit was given to BY, AKW and Alan Wells.

The operators will provide reasonable financial contribution for the wild fish monitoring project. The operations will commission the AFT to develop and undertake a wild fish monitoring programme, which will ideally include sweep netting monthly and report results to the farms within 7 days.

Lice counts will be given weekly, presently they report 3 months in arrears.

AB asked what the ultimate sanction is if the situation is not improved. RB explained they may have to close or move their tonnage.

SA asked how an improvement is expected in a short period. RB explained that the farm would need to reduce their lice number and take responsibility for understanding the limits of that particular farm.

HW asked if AFT will inspect the farm. AFT would have to ask within reason to visit the farm, they have no right to refuse. AKW explained that this is unlikely to occur with a lack of resources, however possibly a timed visit twice a year would work.

TK asked whether the fish farm would need some confidentiality with the information provided. RB acknowledged that confidentiality will need to be respected.

HW asked if Kames were on board with this, RB said they had agreed.

JM spoke of The Ferret and is staggered by the amount of diseases caged salmon produce, is there any evidence of the affects of the disease. AKW explained that Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus has historically closed fish farms in the west.

Local council planners have recently approved a fish farm doubling in size with an EMP from SSC which used the 'old school' position such as, sticking to 3 monthly lag in sea lice data, only considering the site. SSC are going to gather baseline data.

Hopefully the next time they want a site on the loch the new EMP will be in place. TD queried why it is was allowed to go ahead, RB is meeting with the planners next week. The ADSFB were consulted but not on this farm, on a different site. SA will try and find out if SNH were consulted as they are also stretched.

AKW Presentation

Trust Activities 2018/19

Presentation will be available on the website.

Conservation Limits

NASCO

Work is being carried out to bring Scotland into line with other NASCO countries. NASCO is the international governing organisation working towards conserving wild salmon.

Awe Counter

Awe counter shows what is happening in the West, we are now at the point where at a level of 1500 fish is a good year, where as double that was a good year in the 70's and 80's.

Catches

Rod catch data is used to grades rivers. Rivers are a grade 3 in the west coast. AFT are concerned that this system is flawed and doesn't recognise when a small river is being fished hard but may not be a healthy population.

Juvenile Surveys

AFT has been working as part of National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland, which AKW was given 'random' sampling. Most sites were sampled once, however some were sampled up to 3 times. Results will be available in May, however AKW explained that a healthy situation would be 50+ fish, results show 5 or less fish per 100m/sq. in Awe, Mull and Islay. There are better numbers of Fry in Lorn, Fyne and Cowal.

Argyll had the worst performing Salmon Fry number in the country.

Same analysis was done for Trout and they are not as variable.

AKW is expecting there to be another round of this sampling in the future and not to rely on fish catches.

Salmon Smolt Sea Survival

Tagging project ongoing. MSS are organising the tagging, the PIT tag reader is working and will valueate smolts going through a river or turbine.

Future Work

Nutrient Project is ongoing and will maximise smolt production, SA mentioned reading an article on dear legs being left in the rivers by stalkers as they cannot be utilised. AKW does try to encourage stalkers to leave unwanted animal parts in the rivers.

SNH could potentially feed into this project, AKW will send some information.

EMP's

AKW has supported Argyll ADSFB for the development of EMP's with Mowi. The Shuna EMP is likely to be signed later this spring and which would then provide funding to AFT to carry out monitoring in:

Loch Crinan/River Add, Loch Craignish/Barbreck River and Loch Melfort/Caostal Streams.

Other EMPS's are being sought with Scottish Sea Farms and Dawnfresh.

Juvenile Surveys

AFT have will sample Sea Trout for sea lice in the following sites::

Dunstaffanage/Etive, Carradale, Loch Fyne, Loch Riddon

AKW was thanked for all his hard work by JW and RB.

SNH presentation

Amie Williams gave a presentation on the Marine Protected Area Management and Monitoring (MarPAMM) project.

MarPAMM is an environment project to develop tools for monitoring and managing a number of protected coastal marine environments in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland.

MarPAMM will collect data on the abundance, distribution and movement of Marine protected species and habitat.

AKW has agreed to represent Argyll in the steering group at which the objectives will be discussed, the vision for Argyll and what are the issues and aspirations.

Andrew Campbell will chair first meeting.

Contact Amie on Amie.Williams@nature.scot

A.O.B

SA asked it AFT, ADSFB and SNH could work together on future projects. SNH funded survey work on the Euchar, could AFT fund habitat projects that would help fish areas.

Next meeting:

TBC